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## Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program (HACCP) Overview

### Program Overview

The [Budget Act of 2020](#) (Assembly Bill 89, Chapter 7, Statutes of 2020), authorized [HACCP](#), which launched on July 1, 2021. This new state-only program serves California children who are not eligible for Medi-Cal or hearing-related coverage through California Children's Services Program (CCS) and live in a household with income up to 600 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Children can qualify for HACCP regardless of immigration status. Without medically necessary hearing aids, deaf and hard-of-hearing children are at high risk for developmental and educational delays. Children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing must be able to utilize every medical assistance and device available to ensure continued learning. HACCP was initially available to children under 18 without insurance or whose insurance does not cover hearing aids and related services. Effective January 1, 2023, the [Budget Act of 2022](#) (Assembly Bill 179, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2022) expanded the age criteria for HACCP to children under the age of 21, and broadened coverage to children who had other insurance with coverage of \$1,500 or less for hearing aids. After accounting for this expansion to program eligibility criteria and the ongoing outreach efforts described below, although smaller than initial estimates, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) anticipates that the HACCP enrollment will continue to increase further until it reaches a natural equilibrium.

### Benefit Structure and Reimbursement

HACCP uses the Medi-Cal fee-for-service (FFS) [billing and claims structure](#), [FFS provider network](#), and [reimbursement rates](#). HACCP covers hearing aid-related audiology and diagnostic assessments, hearing aids, including assistive listening devices

(ALDs) and surface-worn bone conduction hearing devices (BCHDs); supplies, including ear molds and hearing aid batteries; medically necessary hearing aid accessories; and hearing aid-related audiology and physician services. For a more comprehensive list of covered services, see DHCS' [HACCP Provider Manual](#).

## **Eligibility and Case Management**

DHCS has procured the services of administrative vendor, Maximus, to conduct eligibility determinations and perform ongoing case management for this program on behalf of the Department. The responsibilities of Maximus include the following: 1) performing case intake by reviewing applications to approve/deny applicants for program enrollment, 2) enrolling approved children into the program, 3) operating a call center, 4) developing required program informing and other related materials, 5) maintaining a database for ongoing case management purposes, and 6) conducting program monitoring and reporting.

## **HACCP Action Plan: DHCS' Call to Action**

On October 7, 2023, Governor Newsom returned [Senate Bill 635](#) (Menjivar and Portantino, 2023) to the California State Senate without his signature. The Governor's [veto message](#) identified a need explore increases to Medi-Cal provider payments with the goal of incentivizing additional provider participation in HACCP. In response, DHCS has eagerly proceeded to determine prospective avenues to feasibly improve provider reimbursement – including through exploration of potential rate increases – in a responsible and sustainable manner; however, DHCS would note that any changes to reimbursement rates would need to go through the State budget process. In addition, the Governor reiterated California's commitment to ensuring deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children have access to services and supports they need, including hearing aids, and directed DHCS to take a variety of steps to help individuals maximize benefits. In response, DHCS updated its existing HACCP Action Plan to incorporate recent program information as well as the Governor's six enumerated steps, which are as follows:

1. Partner with other State entities to promote participation and awareness of HACCP;
2. Complete translations for HACCP-related materials into threshold languages;
3. Implement a streamlined annual eligibility review (AER) process to simplify enrollment;
4. Conduct outreach to Medi-Cal providers not yet participating in HACCP to support their participation;
5. Host quarterly webinars with providers and stakeholders; and

6. Continue to identify potential service improvements and strategies to increase HACCP success.

In the [HACCP Action Plan: 2024 Addendum](#) (January 2024), DHCS incorporated program updates and outlined DHCS’ comprehensive strategy relative to ongoing HACCP improvements in 2024, particularly within the framework of the Governor’s six enumerated steps in his SB 635 veto message.

As we move forward into 2025, this sequel addendum to DHCS’ original [HACCP Action Plan](#) (February 2023) outlines DHCS’ continued efforts to further increase awareness of and participation in HACCP, from both the provider engagement and member enrollment perspectives. The following table summarizes DHCS’ implementation strategies and timelines:

Action
<b>1. Partner with other State entities to promote participation and awareness of HACCP.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Partner with California Department of Education (CDE), DHCS’ Medi-Cal Local Education Assistance – Billing Options Program, and large school districts to include HACCP materials with referrals generated from school hearing screenings and to educate school audiometrists about the program and DHH teachers and intervention providers.</li><li>» Partner with Newborn Hearing Screening Program (NHSP) to cross-promote HACCP in relevant NHSP webpages, packets, and appropriate other publications.</li><li>» Partner with CCS for coordinated referrals to HACCP for families who are ineligible for CCS (including those who are no longer eligible), as appropriate.</li><li>» Partner with Department of Developmental Services (DDS) regarding HACCP outreach to Early Start recipients and providers, Regional Centers, and Family Resource Center (FRC) staff.</li><li>» Partner with Covered California to identify opportunities for including and disseminating HACCP information directly to health plans and individuals obtaining health care coverage through the exchange.</li><li>» Partner with Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) regarding opportunities to include provider outreach materials in audiology licensing renewal correspondence.</li><li>» Partner with the California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) and First 5 regarding relevant opportunities to include HACCP in educational resources.</li></ul>

DHCS began this work in Fall 2022, then expanded and enhanced its efforts throughout 2023. By 2024, DHCS had already held meetings with most of the State entities mentioned above to discuss opportunities for cross-promotion of HACCP. DHCS continues to develop these collaborative relationships, prioritizing those related to the inclusion of HACCP information in materials and information distributed by other State entities, alongside their community partners throughout the state, to relevant California residents and providers. Outcomes of these important partnerships include: incorporation of HACCP resources in NHSP webpages and publications; integration of HACCP into existing State processes to support broader community awareness and enrollment; development of new, targeted materials for dissemination through other State entities, such as informational trainings/webinars; and distribution of tailored materials to support outreach efforts by community partners, such as through [Covered California's Special Enrollment Period Toolkit](#). In 2025, DHCS continues to engage with State entities serving DHH children and youth, along with the specialty providers they rely on for hearing-related services, to expand current outreach efforts and identify new opportunities for improved coordination of education and outreach.

## **2. Continue to offer HACCP-related materials in relevant languages.**

- » Program flyers and materials, such as those for webinars or requested by community partners for specific events, will be available in threshold languages as requested or as most relevant to a particular event.

The DHCS website, including HACCP webpages, is viewable in threshold languages available through Google Translate. DHCS completed the translation of the [HACCP online application portal](#) and key [program outreach materials](#), including the HACCP Communications Toolkit and program overview brochure, into DHCS' 19 threshold languages in December 2023. Additionally, processes are in place to ensure that future informational materials can be made available in threshold languages going forward, as exemplified by the 2024 introduction of the [HACCP AER Application](#) and corresponding [instructions](#) in all threshold languages. DHCS also periodically reviews HACCP-related materials to ensure they are up to date.

## **3. Enhance AER resources to support timely and convenient renewal of coverage.**

- » Each year, members must complete an [AER](#) to confirm their continued eligibility to remain enrolled in continuous coverage for hearing aids and related services through HACCP.
- » Optimize AER-related outreach to provide coordinated support for members during their AER window.
- » Identify additional barriers to prospective members enrolling in, or renewing, HACCP coverage.

- » Enhance communication to current HACCP members of importance to renew in order to avoid any lapses in coverage.

In April 2024, DHCS introduced the [HACCP AER Application](#) and corresponding [instructions](#) to streamline the annual process for members to keep their hearing aid coverage during the next 12 months. This new form is shorter and focuses on the information that is most likely to change from one year to the next. In 2025, DHCS will update AER-related correspondence to members to emphasize the importance of ongoing coverage for follow-up services, as well as continued access to medically necessary supplies and accessories that may be required sooner than the expected replacement of their new hearing aid(s). Envelopes with new, attention-grabbing text will help members notice important AER correspondence from HACCP that arrives in their mail. Coordinated expansion of AER follow-up strategies, such as additional correspondence and outbound calls, will further support member awareness of the relevant timeframe for completing their AER on time to prevent a lapse in coverage. DHCS continues to engage with key stakeholders in this space, to identify additional opportunities for optimization.

#### **4. Conduct outreach to increase provider availability to serve HACCP-enrolled children and youth.**

- » Conduct strategic, intentional, and targeted outreach to relevant providers in a variety of settings, such as Medi-Cal FFS providers with the highest claim volume and highest procedure counts for HACCP's covered benefits, who are not yet participating in HACCP. Outreach will focus on increasing provider awareness, addressing provider questions, and supporting engagement of relevant providers.
- » DHCS will continue and expand its targeted outreach campaign to recruit these existing Medi-Cal FFS providers already rendering services for Medi-Cal (including CCS) members to actively serve HACCP members.
  - Outreach materials will include notices for upcoming provider webinars, materials promoting HACCP eligibility criteria and enrollment instructions, brochures for providers to display in their offices, and other resources available to support these providers' awareness and participation in HACCP.
- » Implement parallel targeted outreach to encourage HACCP-participating providers to list their practice location(s) and contact information in the [HACCP Provider Locator](#), facilitating more convenient access to care for HACCP members.
- » Broader outreach to providers includes Provider Bulletins and Newsflashes to let Medi-Cal enrolled providers, regardless of specialty, know about resources like the [HACCP Provider Referral Form](#) for helping non-Medi-Cal patients referred for hearing-related services with accessing coverage through HACCP for those services.

- » Together with audiology professionals and DHH-focused community-based organizations (CBOs), collaboratively improve understanding of challenges faced in providing services to children – both in general and specific to HACCP.
- » Target outreach to otolaryngologists and audiologists who are not yet enrolled in Medi-Cal, with a geographic emphasis on underserved areas of California.
- » Engage with larger-scale health systems that offer pediatric audiology services in California to identify any logistical challenges to their participation in HACCP and co-create solutions to facilitate organization-wide participation.
- » Continue building relationships with provider organizations, including promoting program visibility by participating in or hosting exhibits at conferences and events.
- » Partner with audiology educators in California to promote HACCP among graduating audiologists and university-based clinics.

DHCS completed an initial round of outreach to the highest-billing Medi-Cal FFS providers in early 2023. DHCS continues to utilize a data-driven approach to conduct additional Medi-Cal provider outreach in an effort to increase awareness of HACCP and encourage provider participation, which includes working internally to continue subsequent, recurring outreach at quarterly intervals. Moving into 2025, DHCS will continue to identify and explore additional opportunities to facilitate relevant providers' engagement with Medi-Cal and HACCP, including efforts to improve reimbursement for hearing aid-related benefits and geographically informed outreach.

#### **5. Host quarterly webinars with providers, families, and stakeholders.**

- » **HACCP Webinars for Medical Providers and Hearing Professionals** are opportunities to present providers with information to help pediatric patients and their families to maximize the HACCP benefits. The training sessions will address the program requirements for families to apply for coverage and the claims submission process for audiologists, otolaryngologists, physicians, and their office staff.
- » **HACCP Webinars for Families and Community Partners** share guidance with interested families about applying for hearing aid coverage and helps new members and their families to maximize their HACCP benefits once enrolled. These webinars also provide program updates and tools for stakeholders, educators, and other community partners to support families and children in accessing coverage through HACCP.

In December 2023, DHCS met with a smaller group of key advocates to discuss HACCP stakeholder engagement. This partnership has continued throughout 2024, with regular, ongoing meetings to collaboratively identify new opportunities and follow up on important issues, including but not limited to those enumerated items within this Addendum. DHCS looks forward to continuing these important partnerships in 2025.

**6. Continue to identify and implement potential service improvements and strategies to improve program awareness among families of children and youth who need hearing aids.**

- » Continuous optimization of web content and organization for more contextual and intuitive navigation.
- » Periodically re-review HACCP covered benefits to ensure completeness.
- » Continue rollout of DHCS' updated visual identity resources in program materials.
- » Further enhance [HACCP Provider Locator](#) functionality.
- » Partner with advocates to identify DHH events where Department participation may be effective in promoting HACCP to eligible community members.

DHCS continues to periodically review and evaluate HACCP web content to ensure it is intuitive to navigate, easy to understand, and provides the appropriate level of detail. DHCS will make any necessary refinements on a flow basis. DHCS will also continue to develop new and refine existing HACCP materials, and work with advocates to identify additional relevant outreach channels and opportunities to share these tools with families in an effort to increase awareness. In 2024, DHCS also conducted a deeper dive into HACCP data to improve data quality and public reporting, a process that included engaging with key stakeholders to discuss changes in how monthly enrollment and utilization data is captured and reported on the [HACCP Program Data](#) webpage; rolled out a new [HACCP Provider Locator](#) feature to view all listings (rather than those within proximity of a certain location); worked with stakeholders to identify new procedure codes proposed for addition to HACCP covered benefits; and continued identifying new opportunities to distribute outreach materials for families. Lastly, DHCS will continue to foster its relationships with providers and other key partners. Ultimately, work involves continuous process improvement and DHCS will continue to work on various associated deliverables for this action item.